

## **6. Women in Workforce**

**Prelims Level: Miscellaneous**

**Mains Level: GS-I Role of Women and Women's Organization, Population and Associated Issues, Poverty and Developmental Issues, Urbanization, their problems and their Remedies.**

### **Context:**

- According to a statement by the non- government organisation Azad Foundation - women workforce in the country fell to 18 per cent in 2019 from 37 per cent in 2006, The World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Report this year ranks India at 149th position out of 153 countries on economic participation and opportunity.

### **Observations by the Azad Foundation:**

- According to the Foundation, the Global Gender Gap Report estimates that raising women's participation in the labour force can increase India's GDP significantly.
- The declining women's labour force participation, gender pay gap, high rates of informal work with lack of social security are seen as impediments to the goal of gender equality and empowerment of women in India. Over the last few years more women have taken up Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics courses and are aspiring to enter the workforce. However dropout rates among women is also high, particularly around marriage, maternity and motherhood.

### **Safeguards for Women:**

- The principle of gender equality has been put forward in the Indian Constitution through its Preamble, Fundamental Rights, Fundamental Duties and Directive Principles.
- The Constitution not only grants equality to women, but also empowers the State to adopt measures of positive discrimination in favour of women.
- From the Fifth Five Year Plan (1974-78) onwards has been a marked shift in the approach to women's issues from welfare to development.
- The National Commission for Women was set up by an Act of Parliament in 1990 to safeguard the rights and legal entitlements of women.
- The 73<sup>rd</sup> and 74<sup>th</sup> Amendments (1993) to the Constitution of India have provided for reservation of seats in the local bodies of Panchayats and Municipalities for women, laying a strong foundation for their participation in decision making at the local levels.

- India has also ratified various international conventions and human rights instruments committing to secure equal rights for women.
  - ✓ Key among them is the ratification of the Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in 1993.
- The Government of India attempted to gender sensitise the Budget initially through the Women's Component Plan (by state governments also) and then more intensively with Gender Responsive Budgeting institutionalized through the Gender Budget Statement published every year since 2005 - 2006 with the Union Budget (in some states as well).
- The women's movement and a wide-spread network of non-Government Organisations which have strong grass-roots presence.
- The Indian government is running many schemes for women's empowerment such as the Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana, Beti Bachao Beti Padhao, Mahila E-haat Scheme, Sukanya Samridhhi Yojana, Sakhi Yojana, Ladli Yojana, Digital Laado and the Swachh Bharat Mission.
- Maternity Benefits Act – Maternity benefits are generous for a small minority of Indian women employed in the formal sector and covered under the Maternity Benefit Act.
- NFSA – Under the National Food Security Act, 2013, all pregnant women (except those already receiving similar benefits under other laws) are entitled to maternity benefits of ₹6,000 per child.
- Maternity benefits scheme – a maternity benefit scheme was rolled out in 2017: the Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY).

### **Challenges in Bringing Gender Equality**

- For millions of years, except in few matriarchal societies, the man has always been considered the head of the family.
- Even among the educated, there are deep rooted biases that prevent people from admitting that the man is no longer the provider-in-chief.
- A study at the University of Chicago found that marriages in which the woman earned more were less likely in the first place and more likely to end in divorce.
- It also found that women who out-earned their husbands were more likely to seek jobs beneath their potential and do significantly more housework and child care than their husbands to make their husbands feel less threatened.
- The norms in our families act as a huge deterrent to achieving gender parity.

- Annual Crime in India Report 2018 by NCRB
  - ✓ According to the report, 3,78,277 cases of crime against women were reported in the country, up from 3,59,849 in 2017.
  - ✓ Uttar Pradesh topped the list with 59,445 cases, followed by Maharashtra (35,497) and West Bengal (30,394).
  - ✓ The conviction rate in rape-related cases stood at 27.2% even though the rate of filing chargesheets was 85.3% in such cases.
  - ✓ Cruelty by husband or his relatives (31.9%) followed by assault on women with intent to outrage her modesty (27.6%) constituted the major share of crimes against women.

### **Sociology behind the Gender-Divide in Workplace:**

- Research shows that when men and women apply for jobs — be in the labour market, or in places where high level qualifications are demanded, men candidates engage in self-promotion, and are boastful while equally qualified women are more ‘modest’ and ‘undersell’ themselves.
- Even in groups and situations where men and women are present as colleagues, the views of women are either ignored or listened to less seriously than those of men.
- As a result, women tend to underestimate their ability relative to men, especially in public settings, and negotiate less successfully.
- Dual role played by women as a part of the workforce and as a caretaker of the family, makes it difficult for her to align in the same position as that of men.

### **Why Female Labour Force Participation Matters Beyond Social Cause?**

- Ignoring India’s declining female labour force participation at a time of economic distress is a mistake.
- Women in workforce improve overall efficiency and the country’s economy
- In India, where young women’s education is now at par with men’s, ignoring that half of the population isn’t participating equally in the economy means we are missing out on many things, like-
  - ✓ Innovation.
  - ✓ Entrepreneurship.
  - ✓ Productivity gains.
  - ✓ Large potential to increase in GDP

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- A report by McKinsey Global Institute suggests that if women participated in the Indian economy at the level men do, annual GDP could be increased by 60 per cent above its projected GDP by 2025.
  - The same analysis also suggested that India's potential GDP gains through achieving economic gender parity were larger than gains in any of the other regions they studied.

